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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001644

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BM](#) [ASSK](#)

SUBJECT: CEASE-FIRE ETHNICS VIEW ASSK DIALOGUE AS ROAD MAP
PRECONDITION

REF: RANGOON 1585

Classified By: CDA, a.i. Ronald McMullen for Reasons 1.5 (B,D)

1. (C) Summary: A leading coalition of ethnic minority political parties, associated with Burma's cease-fire groups, insists that the SPDC must engage with ASSK and other political leaders before reconvening a National Convention. The coalition also demands that the country's ethnic groups must be able to select their own delegates to the Convention and that subsequent steps in the regime's "road map" must be the product of a tripartite dialogue. The regime is unlikely to take heed and will instead reserve its negotiating chips to deal with the country's active insurgent movements. End summary.

2. (SBU) In a letter to the U.S. Embassy dated December 10, the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA), a leading coalition of ethnic opposition parties, lambasted the SPDC's attempts to reconvene a National Convention as "an insult to the will of the (Burmese) people and the civilized international community." The UNA acknowledges that the regime's seven-point "road map" for a transition to democracy had some merit, but the alliance is highly critical of the SPDC's plan to resume the same flawed Convention process that was abandoned in 1996.

3. (SBU) According to the UNA, the ethnic parties have a "serious desire to participate in the political process of national building" and view the National Convention, if genuine and democratic, as an essential step to achieve a new constitution, political stability, and economic development. However, according to the UNA, the SPDC is manipulating the process by hand-picking pro-regime Convention delegates, neglecting democratic principles, and ignoring the UNGA Burma resolution.

4. (SBU) In its December 10 letter, the UNA stated its view that the regime must take three key steps prior to reconvening the National Convention:

--engage in a substantive political dialogue with ASSK and other political leaders, including representatives from the ethnic groups;

--accord each group participating in the Convention the right to select its own delegates;

--implement subsequent steps in the "road map" on the basis of a tripartite dialogue among the SPDC, the NLD, and the ethnic nationalities.

5. (C) Background note: The UNA was formed in 2002 by Burma's second largest democratic opposition party, the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), and nine other political parties representing the country's seven major ethnic minority groups as a means to achieve common objectives and support a tripartite dialogue. In 1992 the SPDC banned a predecessor coalition, the United Nationalities League for Democracy (UNLD) and in subsequent years "de-registered" most of the political parties that currently belong to the UNA.

6. (C) Comment: Hkun Htun Oo, Chairman of the SNLD and a Member-elect of Parliament, is the leading force behind the UNA and its December 10 letter. The Shan politician is closely aligned with the NLD and has been a leading advocate among the ethnic groups on behalf of ASSK, insisting that the regime engage her before reconvening the National Convention. However, the rest of the UNA is comprised of small parties who have little to lose by holding out for inclusion of the NLD. The SPDC is unlikely to bend to the demands of the UNA and will instead reserve its negotiating chips to deal with the country's active insurgent movements. Nonetheless, the UNA's letter stands in contrast to recent press reports that indicate many leading ethnic groups are throwing their weight behind the regime and its "road map" process. End comment.
McMullen